



Cold Temperatures ... High Bills

Many of our customers received higher-than-normal utility bills in early 2010. The reason is that an extended period of bone-chilling temperatures caused customers to use more electricity or natural gas to heat their homes. This increased usage resulted in higher bills.

How Cold Was It?

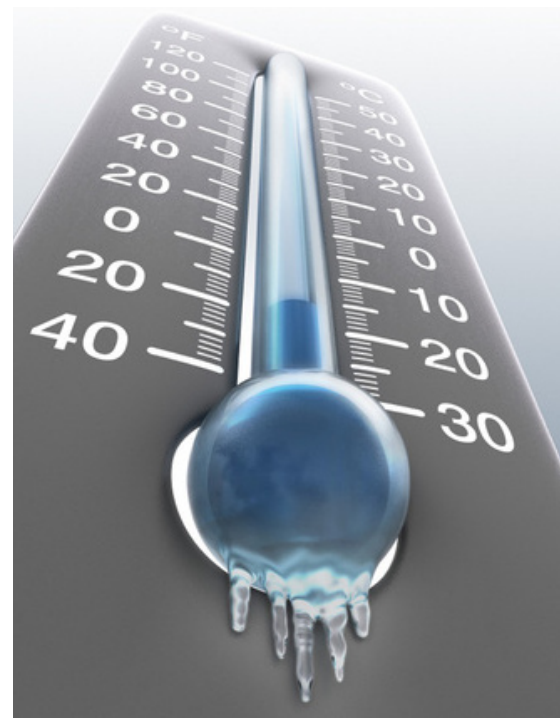
It was extremely cold from mid-December to mid-January. In fact, it was 66% colder than the same time last year. Low temperatures during this time period show 29 of 32 night-time readings below freezing.

The first two weeks of January were particularly cold, with lows hovering in the upper teens to low 20's and the highs in the mid 30's and low 40's. Compare that to the average low for January which is 29 degrees and the average high which is 52 degrees. The National Weather Service reports that a cold snap of this duration was last seen 33 years ago, in January 1977. There's no question, it was cold!

How Did the Weather Impact My Bill?

Compared to the five-year average, our residential customers used 28% more electricity to stay warm during this recent cold snap. That increased usage was reflected in their bills. The average January bill for residential electric customers this year was about \$173, which is 26% higher than the five-year average.

Gas usage followed a similar pattern. Again, compared to the five-year average, our residential natural gas customers used 52% more gas, and bills were 53% higher. The average residential natural gas bill for January was \$161.83.



Lowering Your Bill

While none of us can control the weather, we do encourage customers to take steps to reduce energy usage and lower bills as much as possible during the winter months. We advise that you focus your efforts on the biggest energy users – heating/cooling systems and water heating.

Energy/Water Tips

A heating system on average uses 60% of a home's energy. As outside temperatures drop, heating systems must work harder to maintain a home's set temperature. The efficiency of a heat pump is reduced in severely cold weather, forcing the back-up heat supply to come on more often. This back-up heat could be three times more expensive than the heat pump alone.

- If you have an electric heat pump, in winter only, find the lowest comfortable setting, and don't change it. Set it and forget it. The Department of Energy recommends a setting of 68 degrees. Every degree is worth 3-5% in operating costs. When you adjust the thermostat on a heat pump system, even by just one degree, it automatically forces the less economical back-up system to start running.
- For other forms of heat (natural gas, oil, propane, geothermal, electric furnace and electric baseboard), adjust your thermostat as needed daily, and throughout the day. The Department of Energy recommends a setting of 68 degrees (or lower).

If you're gone for several hours or more, set the thermostat at 55 degrees, or even cut it off (unless pipes are in danger of freezing). Be sure to turn the thermostat down at night, and cover up with blankets.

It is less expensive to turn your heating system down or off during the day when the home is unoccupied. It takes less energy to bring the inside temperature up to your desired comfort level than if you left the system on all day.

See **Lowering Your Bill** on the back page

A One-Stop Shop!

Our customers often compare their GUC bills with the utility bills of friends or relatives in other cities. Before you compare utility bills, be sure you're comparing "apples to apples."

Greenville Utilities is a four-service utility. We serve our customers with electric, water, sewer and natural gas. Most areas of the United States are not served by four-service utilities, and their utility bill may reflect charges for only one service. So, comparing that bill to the GUC bill would be like comparing apples and oranges.

Our customers have an advantage because we are a "one-stop shop." This is a convenience in many ways. Customers receive one bill for all four services, and can take care of all their utility needs from one customer service contact point.

In addition, to save time and money for everyone, GUC provides billing services for the City of Greenville's refuse (garbage) collection and stormwater fees. These services are not provided by GUC, but they appear on our bill. The services are provided by the City of Greenville and appear on our bill as "City Charges."

For a residential GUC customer, stormwater and refuse fees add an average of \$20/month to their bill.

So, when comparing your bill to another's, be sure that their's also includes the gas bill, water bill, sewer bill, garbage fees, and stormwater fees – in addition to the electric bill. That way you will see a more accurate comparison of total utility costs.

Lowering Your Bill, *continued from the front page*

- Space heaters are electrical resistance heat and, therefore, are expensive to operate. It can be economical, however, to use a space heater in a small, unheated area such as a bathroom for short periods of time. It is cheaper to heat a small room with a space heater than to raise the temperature of the entire home with the central heating system. Space heaters running on high cost 18 cents/hour to operate. That may not sound expensive, but there are 720 hours in a month. Running a space heater constantly will cost \$129.60 by the end of the month.
- Using a space heater to heat small areas, for short periods of time can be economical. If you use the space heater to warm up one small room for 30 minutes in the morning, you can have that added comfort for less than \$2.70 on your monthly bill.

Next to heating the home, heating water is the second largest user of energy—accounting for about 20 percent of the family’s energy budget. In order to save on your water heating use:

- Fix the drips. One drop of hot water a second is nearly 500 gallons a month wasted down the drain.
- Take a shower instead of a bath. An average shower requires half the water of a bath.
- Install a flow restrictor on your showerhead to save hot water. Flow restrictors limit the flow to 3 gallons or less per minute and can save \$25 a year.
- Don’t keep hot water running while washing dishes or shaving.
- Insulate your water heater and set the temperature as reasonably low as possible. Although manufacturers used to set water heater thermostats at 140°F, most households usually only require them set at 120°F. For each 10 degree reduction in water temperature, you can save between 3%–5% in energy costs.

For more energy/water tips, visit our website, www.guc.com or call Energy Services at 252-551-1525 for specific information about reducing energy usage and lowering your bill.

Helpful GUC Programs:

Energy Surveys: Greenville Utilities offers free Energy Surveys for residential and light commercial structures. An Energy Specialist will make an on-site evaluation, checking for insulation, caulking, weather-stripping, heating system efficiency and other energy-related items. After careful analysis of your specific situation, the Specialist will suggest measures to reduce energy usage. Call 252-551-1525 for more information.

Online Energy Audit: GUC offers Energy Depot®, a set of online tools and resources to help you better understand and manage your energy use and costs. Energy Depot is your one-stop resource for energy information and it’s available free at www.guc.com.

Equal Pay: For customers who are interested in avoiding “spikes” in their utility bills, GUC offers Equal Pay. With this bill payment option, customers pay the same amount for 12 consecutive months. Payments are based on the average of the customer’s bills from the year before. Any necessary adjustments are made at the end of the year. To sign up, go to www.guc.com. Click on the Customer Service section. From there, you can submit your information and a Customer Service Representative will contact you to complete the application process. Or, you can call us at 252-752-7166.

Beat-The-Peak: GUC residential electric customers can sign up for Beat-the-Peak and save up to \$70/year on their utility bills. Beat-the-Peak is a system that cycles off air conditioners, water heaters, electric furnaces and heat pump heat strips for a short period of time during peak demand. Peaks occur when customers are using the greatest amount of electricity. Sign up for Beat-the-Peak on our website, www.guc.com, or call 252-551-1583.

Can You Recognize a Natural Gas Leak?

Though natural gas pipeline incidents are uncommon, you should know their signs:

- LOOK.** Blowing dirt, bubbling creeks or ponds, dry spots in moist areas or dead plants surrounded by live, green plants may indicate a natural gas leak.
- LISTEN.** Near a gas appliance or line, there may be a hissing sound when natural gas is leaking.
- SMELL.** Stay alert for the distinctive, rotten-egg-like smell of natural gas. You should take action anytime you detect even a small amount of this odor in the air. If you suspect a natural gas leak, take action!
- LEAVE.** If you ever detect a natural gas leak, LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. Don’t try to find or stop the leak. Do not touch anything electrical before you leave or use a telephone, even a cell phone. Do not smoke, turn appliances or lights on or off, or operate any vehicle or equipment that could create a spark.
- CALL.** Once you are out of the suspected area, immediately call our 24-hour Emergency Hotline at 752-5627. If the smell of gas is particularly strong, you may also call 911.

For Your Safety

Greenville Utilities has a comprehensive communications program designed to promote natural gas safety. A federal rule requires that we communicate specific key messages, and that we evaluate the effectiveness of our public education efforts regarding natural gas safety.

One tool GUC uses to measure the effectiveness of our communications is an automated telephone survey. We plan to conduct the survey March 29th and 30th. If you receive a call, please take a few minutes to provide answers. The information will help us improve our communication efforts to ensure the safety of all those living in Greenville-Pitt County.

Weathering The Storm: GUC’s Emergency Management Plan

When the weather forecast calls for snow, everyone has a different “to do” list. Some people rush to the grocery store to stock up on bread and milk. Children get out their snow gear in anticipation of wintry outdoor fun. At GUC, winter storm forecasts trigger the activation of our Emergency Management Plan, and that’s what we did prior to the snow and ice storm that hit our service area in late January.

Trucks were fueled and ready to go. Inventory was in place. Crews were lined up and ready to be called into action. The Greenville Utilities training room was transformed into “Storm Central,” with 13 additional phone lines ready for Storm

Team Operators. We were ready for whatever “old man winter” would bring.

Fortunately, very few, less than 20, of our customers experienced outages and all power was restored quickly. “There were some problems in customers’ yards,” said Mark Windham, Load Management Systems Dispatching Supervisor. “We didn’t have any problems with trees knocking out major power lines.”

While we made special preparations in anticipation for the snow and ice, we prepare for emergencies all year long. As a community-owned utility, GUC owns and operates the electric distribution system

that delivers power to you. We invest in that system and work year ’round to keep it in top condition, ready for whatever weather comes our way.

Our team of professionals works all year to maintain and repair overhead power lines. Line Clearing crews work each and every day to methodically trim branches, even entire trees, that are a danger to overhead power lines. Their work is critical to the operation of the electric distribution system. And, their work is never more appreciated than during a storm. We have a well-trained workforce, and a well-maintained system. That, and a little luck, kept damage during the recent winter storm to a minimum.